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MSU trustees OK CIA grant

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Michigan State University's Board of Trustees Thursday approved \$18.2 million in gifts, grants and contracts, including a CIA-administered \$740,000 grant for a mathematics professor.

The grant, from the U.S. Department of Defense's Advanced Research Project Agency, will pay for mathematics research by Professor Shui Nee Chow for two years.

The grant has been criticized by John Masterson, a mathematics professor who opposes actions of the CIA and contends the grant was not accepted through the proper channels.

But university leaders and board members expressed concern that denying the grant would interfere with academic freedom. John Cantlon, vice president for research and graduate studies, has said the grant was accepted within university guidelines.

Speaking before trustees, Masterson asked that the board set aside the grant until "a clear policy on doing business with murderers is established."

He criticized the university's willingness to sign a contract with what he described as a criminal organization regularly involved in international terrorist activities.

The grant mostly will be used for mathematical equations helping computer equipment quickly process complex data, MSU officials said. It is part of a project with five other universities across the nation.

Mathematics department chairman Kyung Whan Kwun said he endorses any research by faculty as long as it is performed within the legal state, federal and university boundaries.

"(Masterson) has every right to say what he feels, but the department has to uphold the individual faculty's freedom to pursue research," he said.

"The department's position is to endorse the research," he said.

In other action, the board:

- Approved a grant from the MSU Foundation for the construction of a \$1.2 million addition to MSU's National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory. The addition will provide additional space for both applied and theoretical nuclear physics research.

The new room will help MSU move ahead with plans for a major international center for theoretical physics studies growing around the work of George Bertsch, John Hannah Distinguished Professor, Provost Clarence Winder said.

- Approved a merger between the School of Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture and the Department of Geography effective July 1, 1986.

Urban planning and landscape architecture will be designated programs within the Department of Geography. The reorganization aims to encourage cooperative teaching and research activities, and expansion of cooperative community service programs, said Gwen Andrew, dean of MSU's Department of Social Science.

Similar departments already are organized at other leading research universities, she said.

- Approved the purchase of an 840-acre farm east of Escanaba to conduct experimental tree planting to spur economic development in Michigan. The experimental forest will be similar to that already operating at the Kellogg Biological Station near Battle Creek.

- Approved the sale of variable rate bonds in the second of a two-stage sale. The first stage, a \$30 million fixed rate issue, was approved by the board in October.

The entire package calls for the university to issue \$80 million in bonds. A total of \$55 million will finance the construction of six university buildings. The rest refinances outstanding student fee debt.